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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [AY](#) [NZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND ASSESSES VIABILITY OF NEW AIRCRAFT  
ACCESS IN ANTARCTICA; EYE TOWARDS FIGHTING ILLEGAL FISHING

1. (SBU) Summary: National Science Foundation (NSF), Raytheon, and Embassy representatives attended a logistics planning briefing hosted by the NZ Defence Force (NZDF) October 14 to assess the viability of allowing Royal NZ Air Force P-3K Orion and Boeing 757 aircraft to use the landing areas at McMurdo Station, Antarctica. The use of ice runways at McMurdo Station by NZDF P3Ks would significantly increase the surveillance area under the GoNZ's Operation Mawsoni, which supports the inspection regime of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) by locating vessels conducting illegal and unregulated fishing (IUU.) The Boeing 757s would be used to offset U.S. C-130 personnel and cargo flights. While the projects present logistic challenges, both are viable, and could be underway by the 2006 Antarctic summer season. As of yet, neither project has been officially presented to members of the NZ Government. The reps from NSF and Raytheon (who provide logistical services for USG operations in Antarctica) agreed at the meeting to look into housing and other logistical requirements for the proposed projects. Powerpoint presentations have been e-mailed to EAP/ANP and OES/OA. End summary.

CCAMLR Surveillance

2. (U) Trevor Hughes, Antarctica Policy Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) outlined the current status of Operation MAWSONI, including the policy and legal aspects. Hughes pointed out that even a single P3K flight with increased surveillance coverage could significantly deter IUU fishing boats. In concert with MFAT's Legal Representative, Hughes did not foresee any legal problems raised by allowing P3K Orion flights into Antarctica. Hughes noted that under Article 1.2 of the Antarctic Treaty, which states that the continent can be used "for scientific research, or any other peaceful purpose," use of the P3Ks would be allowed, but the GoNZ would have to provide prior notification of their use to all Antarctic Treaty nations. He confirmed that the use of the aircraft has no military purpose, and is not related to NZ's territorial claim in Antarctica.

Can A P-3K Orion Land At McMurdo?

3. (SBU) Group Captain Short presented the NZDF's initial assessment of how operating P3K flights from McMurdo would specifically increase surveillance of the CCAMLR area, including patrol area scope and increased time on the ice. The flights could triple the area of the Ross Sea under surveillance, and a 5-day run in and out of McMurdo could produce 24 hours of patrol, versus the current 2 hours using Christchurch as the return point. (NB: This would comprise 3 6-hour patrols and 6 hours to deploy and redeploy.)

4. (SBU) Short noted that overall, the P3K Orion could operate under Antarctic conditions. The aircraft is suitable to temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius, and the ice runway is long enough to accommodate the P3K's 4,600 foot take-off length. Short highlighted potential concerns, noting especially that because of the P3K's low wing design, exhaust efflux could melt the runway during takeoff.

5. (SBU) Short also said that the availability of ice survival training may limit available personnel, as only 10-15 aircrew are trained annually. However, he appeared optimistic that with the creation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for ice flights and the crews, increasing familiarity with polar flying and McMurdo's facilities, there would be a progressive build-up of capabilities.

Timeline

6. (SBU) Barring hiccups, the NZDF could achieve full P3K operations by the 2006 Antarctic Season. Short noted that NZ's continued commitment to the Global War on Terror (GWOT) decreased available resources, as did planned upgrades to military aircraft. For now, the NZDF is planning to develop SOPs for Antarctic missions by July 2005. This season, they will send two maintenance personnel to the Ice for familiarization, and to conduct an exhaust efflux trial.

17. (SBU) Group Captain Short also presented a summary of the requirements for landing Boeing 757 (B757) aircraft on the ice runway, which appear to be more problematic, although overall policies and procedures would mirror those for the C-130 flights. The largest obstacle is that the planes would need a new Navigational fit-out, as they do not possess TACAN, have no radar, and no GPS. There is no "GRID" navigation system available. Another concern is that special equipment may be needed to load and offload cargo, as the hold is 13 ft off the ground. The airfield was deemed suitable, with sufficient length to account for any problems.

18. (SBU) The proposed B757 flights would be able to handle 110 passengers each carrying 76 pounds (approx. 16,000 kgs.) Short noted that the point of no return in flying to the Ice was 80-110 minutes from McMurdo. Short then pointed out that there were a number of procedures and concerns that had not been examined in detail, including maintenance procedures for the aircraft, risk analysis for the flights, the feasibility of holding spare parts on the Ice, etc. These would be addressed dependent on whether or not the project receives approval from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs and Trade, neither of which have been briefed at this time.

Timeline  
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19. (SBU) Short indicated that the NZDF hopes to have draft policies by October 2005, and that operations would be possible by late 2006. This program would be an NZDF priority decision, but not before 2006.

Issues for the USG to Consider  
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110. (SBU) During the course of the meeting, issues that would need to be addressed by the NSF and other USG agencies were raised. Representatives from NSF and Raytheon offered to examine each of these, and to keep their GoNZ counterparts apprised of developments. Concerns included:

- Housing of crew and maintenance staff.
- Transport to and from Pegasus.
- Ground handling support and equipment to access the B757 cargo hold (at 13 ft. high)
- Housing and shipping of fuel and other spare parts.

Attendees  
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(This list is incomplete)

111. (U) U.S  
Art Brown, National Science Foundation (NSF)  
Michael Hush, Logistics Manager for McMurdo, Raytheon Corp  
Katherine Hadda, Political/Economic Counselor  
Dorothy Rogers, Political Officer  
Warrant Officer Michelle Barkwell, DAO

New Zealand  
Trevor Hughes, MFAT Antarctic Policy Unit  
Alice Revell, MFAT Antarctic Policy Unit  
Rosemary Paterson, MFAT Legal Division  
Brigadier General Clive Lilley, NZDF  
Air Commander Graham Lintott, NZDF  
Graeme Briggs, NZDF Antarctic Liaison  
Group Captain Short  
Julian Tangere, Antarctica NZ  
Swindells